2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa

forty-five to come and eat. 'Yesterday we just conversed, you did not eat. Now we have come to fetch you.' The mother and infants were in the little hut. Mwakobela was sitting and eating with us. They explained that of old he would not have done so. 'The people in the old days were greatly afraid—the father of twins did not meet and converse with other people, no, they were much afraid. He waited in the banana. But since the Europeans came we do not fear. The Europeans took the twins in their arms and said: "Don't be afraid." In the old days the father of twins would take a spear and shield and dance the war-dance, and cry the war-cry, but we have dropped this custom nowadays.'

May 14

We visited Mwakobela and found him sitting alone making a bow-handle. His wife was in the hut with the infants, attended by her mother.

May 22

We found Mwakobela hoeing a garden for beans. He told us that the elder of the twins had died two nights ago and had been buried early yesterday morning. . . .

No one came to the infant's burial; we buried him ourselves. But had he been a big child then people would have come. The doctor has not come yet [for the induction]. I have not got the millet yet.

July 7

6. *The induction (ukwingisha)*

We arrived about 11 a.m. and found Mwakobela and his brother sitting outside the house with several guests. They were cutting a hide to make thongs for tying up cattle. By noon there were present twelve men, twenty-two married women, three adolescent girls, six 'daughters-in-law' sitting apart, and a crowd of children.[1] The doctor, a middle-aged woman and a distant connection of Mwakobela, arrived about noon. With the help of Mwakobela's wives she built a fire outside and cooked a pot of medicines. The women sat round this fire chatting; the little girls built themselves a separate fire, and the small boys yet another. Tiny children were with their mothers. At two-fifteen the doctor started the washing. She took a little powdered medicine from a bamboo flask and put it into a calabash of cold water. She made

[1] The identity and kinship connections of those who participated are discussed in Chapter VIII.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Ndali

765 they seek out six or three officiants, and they build a temporary hut behind the living huts where they strain three pots of beer, which they call 'the beer of the shades'. These officiants do not bathe their bodies because they say: 'Let us be with the shade when we make the beer (*tujoge nagwe ungaka ku tulakomite shaadwe*).' The rest of the beer is strained in the house.

When they have brewed it they take one potful from the temporary hut and pour the contents on top of the grave; then they dig a hole on the grave and place in it a little pot of beer. What is left in these two pots they drink, together with the rest of the beer, and there is much drumming.

766 After a long time has passed, perhaps two years, if there has been sickness in the home, they think that the deceased is making them giddy, is causing them to be ill. So they dig up the corpse and take all the bones and fingers and toe nails. If one is left the sickness is not cured. When Mulaga, the grandchild of Mwakalenga, was ill they dug up the corpse and the illness ceased very quickly. They pile up the bones which have been dug up.

III. MARRIAGE NEGOTIATIONS AND GIFTS

767 *Asymmetrical*: One of our comrades in Kalombo heard that there was an unmarried girl at the Chief Mwaambwe's, so one Monday he said to three of us: 'Don't go away, friends, we are going to woo the chief's daughter at Mwaambwe's.' So we put on our best clothes, those we wear to church, and we went to the home of the father of the girl. He was the younger brother of the Chief Mwaambwe by the same mother, and he told us: 'I am not the father (*ngwise*). She is my own child, but the father is the chief. Go to him' [i.e. authority over his daughter rested with his elder brother]. The girl had reached puberty. Someone else had married her, but her father had received only one cow, so the elder brother, the chief, was angry and took away the girl from her husband. My friend had never met her, never. He had just heard that there was an unmarried girl at that place, because the custom of making love to girls in the long grass is not a traditional one: a girl used to stay at her father's house. A young man went to the father before he spoke with the girl; he never spoke to her in secret. Then the father would send the girl to speak with the young man. She came and sat down and the young man looked at her closely and his friends who accompanied him helped him. Formerly a young miss did not wear many clothes, he only wore one cloth in front, and a bone body-ring, so that his whole body might be seen, and she might look closely. Also he sits high on a stool, while his fellows sit on the ground, that he may be seen by the girl.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
F1417 Ngonde F1417

643 chief. For Chungu must not die a natural death;
645 the land would be turned into water should such a
771 calamity be allowed to happen. Having decided that the illness is really grave, the councillors, one by one, give their voice in the formula, "*Siku na mwaka*," literally, day and year; but actually meaning, "Does God die?" In solemn procession these terrible persons enter the house, and, having turned out the chief's wives, lay him down on the floor. Two keep him in that posture, while a third stops his breath by holding his mouth and nostrils, a fourth meanwhile gently slapping him all over the body until the life has gone out of him.

643 No announcement of the death was made. One of
645 the councillors lived in the royal dwelling, so that if
766 any came to consult Chungu a response might be given, and as he was rarely seen by common men, it was easy to keep up the deception. The councillors with their own hands digged the grave, and on their shoulders, at midnight, carried the body, anointed with lion fat, and enswathed in cloth, to the place of burial. Six or eight slaves, who did not return, went with them. Four went down into the grave to receive the body of their dead master, two at the head and two at the feet, and, in sitting position, held him in their arms. The remaining slaves being placed on the top, the soil was filled in on living and dead.

After the lapse of about a month, a big iron drum, now lost, was beaten, and it conveyed only one message to the people. "*Kwisiw ku Mpande*," Mpande (the royal residence) has done its work;

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

Chungu is dead. Then the chiefs and their men, fully armed, gathered to the mourning. Weeping there was none, for Chungu must not be wept for; and women were not present, for the mourning for Chungu is war; quarrels may break out among the men, and there may be many deaths before the mourning is over. The chiefs bring corn for the feast, and gifts of ivory to be laid up in the house where Chungu goes to pray when he prays alone.

The councillors now address themselves to the task of selecting a successor. There are no candidates; for not only must Chungu himself be helped out of the world, but all his sons, born after his accession, are put to death at birth. Daughters are allowed to live, and sons born before their father attained to the chief dignity, are not under the ban. Here again British rule steps in, but British rule has not yet been able to sweep all fear of the past out of the minds of the people. From among the *Bakwenge*, a circle of families within which the new Chungu must be found, name after name is presented to the spirits by the diviner, and when the divining rod indicates that the right name has been presented, the formula is uttered, "*Mapasi bitike*," the underworld has spoken.

At a great feast, at which all men of royal blood must be present, Mabwe, one of the councillors, by hereditary right offers prayer to the spirits, as if the selection had not already been made:

"Ye chiefs, we pray you to show us our lord, who shall be our leader in all things. Let him be the man of your appointing, not of our desire: to

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
F3817 Ngoude F3817

683 582. themselves must be free from any kind of blemish. They drink a medicine weaker than that taken by their husband, but sufficiently potent to make them respected by all the other women of the district.

The death of a chief, like that of Chonga, is a 622. great event. An immense crowd of men and women •764 gather on these occasions. At the death of Mwelonge, near Karonga, in 1913, fifty head of cattle were killed for the feast. Of these perhaps thirty were the property of the dead chief; the rest were brought by the mourners as a token of respect for the dead man; but for each animal so killed, an equivalent, an ox for an ox, a cow for a cow, was given to the donor from the dead man's herd, so that the herd left by Mwelonge was reduced by fifty at his death. Intense emotion is generated at these gatherings, frequently leading to death. And in the past it was the rule that a chief should not go to his fathers alone. If therefore fighting broke out, and men were killed, it was only right and fitting that this should be so. In 1897 there was a small rising against the Germans, in which the chief Mwakalinga and many of his people were killed. The chief having been killed, it was not surprising that there should be a heavy death-roll among his men. The death of Mwasalema in 1918 was followed, quite naturally, by the influenza which carried off so many of his people.

622. About a month after the death of the chief, the beating is resumed, this time with immense quantities of beer which has been prepared in the interval. The new chief is now anointed with oil, and the

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
F911? Ngonde F911?

which killed the man passing over to those present at the funeral. Those who performed the *post mortem* take medicine as well. The funeral ox or cow is now killed, and the flesh divided among the various groups. The next stage is to "disinherit" the dead man, to cut him off from all connection with earthly matters. His mats were buried with him; now his bananas are cut down, his hoes are taken to the grave and the hafts broken, while all baskets and pots are destroyed and left to rot there. His cattle go to his heirs, and his wives build themselves huts in which they live for a year, "covering the footsteps of the dead man"; after which they also go to the heirs. (Much of this is now falling into disuse, especially around Karonga.) The dead man has been dissociated from the living: the bananas grow again, but they are not his; his house may be occupied, but he has only the rights of a ghost in it; and in many places the house is left to decay as soon as the funeral is over, and the wives have built themselves huts not far off. But the belief also prevails, side by side with the desire to cut off the dead man from the living, that by destroying his goods they go with him to the land of spirits.

The Konde have a strange belief, that a dead body casts no shadow; if it does, it is a sign that the spirit still lingers around, and if he is not driven off, another member of the family will die soon. The most effective way of despatching him to his proper abode is to burn his body. If the diviner finds that a second death in the family is due to the reluctance of the first to go to his fathers, the body is dug up, and

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

766 medicine placed in the empty grave, which attracts the lizard into which the soul of the dead man has entered. It is thus caught and burned in the grave. The parents or near relatives drink medicine, and the body is carried off by the doctor to be burned in the bush. Among the Bandali, all bodies are dug up after the flesh has rotted away, and the bones are taken into the forest, where they are placed in a sitting position against a tree and left there. A much more gruesome custom, which prevails among the Bandali, is that of keeping the bones on the verandah of the heir's house, done up in banana leaves, which are renewed as required, the bones being occasionally anointed with oil. Here and there throughout Kondeland are places called *Isaga*, so named from the verb *kusaga*, to cast away. In the long past, when a man was dying, and all hope of recovery had been abandoned, he was carried to the *Isaga*, placed in a sitting position, and left to die. After death the flesh was devoured by birds or beasts. Nowhere, so far as I have discovered, is this repulsive practice now followed.

765 535 The death dance begins as soon as the first wailing is over, and continues as long as people continue coming in to mourn. The men carry spears or sticks, if the dead man was of any importance; the women have leaves or tails. When the dance has fully developed, the men form one line, and the women another, facing them. The two lines approach each other, the men raising their spears and shields, the women waving the leaves or tails; at about a yard apart they retire again, shouting or singing as the drum

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

Lepers are now buried like ordinary persons. But in the not very distant past, they were placed in a sitting position against a tree, and so left to be devoured. No one of those who carried the body looked behind, lest he also should be "caught" by the disease. 766

About a month after the funeral, the beer feast takes place. A small quantity is taken to the grave, and the dead man is addressed, and bidden again to go to his ancestors. "Take this beer as an offering to them. The ox that we have killed is also for them." The day is given up to eating and drinking, with intervals of wailing, the men in the open, the women in the house of the heir, or near relative of the dead man. 765

The ceremonies for women and children are similar to those described. A small chief, near Karonga, who was utterly neglectful of his mother during her life, impoverished himself in the splendour of her funeral. The grave was completely lined with expensive cloths, and the body was decked out as it never had been in life. The man's grief was genuine; or if it was not grief, it was fear of what the old lady, with her renewed powers, might do, if he did not attend to her now that she was dead. 764

When the mourning is over, all the friends of the dead man shave their heads. Omission of this ceremony involves the careless one in a quarrel with the departed. 765 302

Here and there throughout the country ancient customs survive which have been dropped by the majority of the people. In many places the entrance of the heir upon his new position is accompanied by 768

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
F7617 Ngonde F7617

The Bakifuna go to the stream to wash, garlanded with flowers, and carrying a small stone. Flowers and stone are thrown into the stream after the washing, and the company re-enter the house. The doctor takes water and pours it on the roof, upon which all come out one by one, the water dripping on each as he or she passes. Anointed with oil, they all go to the place of burial, where, resting on elbows and knees, they draw themselves along the grave, slightly disturbing the soil as they go. The hair is then cut, and the feast follows.

When a chief is *in articulo mortis*, his headmen and his wives are present, and he is addressed, while still living, as common men are addressed at the graveside. "Go to God and the spirits; go to your fathers (naming them). Rest there, and tell them what is happening here above."

After he is dead, the nails of his fingers and toes are clipped, and his hair cut, and given to the doctor, who will make medicine with them to prevent the disease which killed the chief passing over to others. The dead man is now dressed as common men are dressed for burial, but much more elaborately, and, if he is a relative of Chungu, he is placed in a sitting position in the house, where his wives and headmen embrace him for the last time. If he is a very important chief, like Chungu, his death is not yet announced to the people.

Meantime a cow has been killed at the place where the body is to be buried, and the headmen dig the grave, usually by night, if intimation has not been

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
F3617 Ngonde F3617

766 made that the chief is dead. The body is brought
to the grave by the headmen, and the dead cow is
643 lowered in first; then the chief, in a sitting position,
622 facing the Songo country, if that was his original home.
Torches are used if the night is dark. When the grave
is filled in, all partake of the medicine made from the
dead man's nails and hair. The washing ceremonies
are the same as for common men; but the widows
will not go near the men who placed the body in the
grave until the latter have given them a gift of some
kind, though the exact function of the gift is not clear.

643 No chief of any importance dies a natural death:
761 that is to say, however and whenever a chief dies, it is
assumed that some one was responsible. It is believed
that chiefs *die* more easily than common men, and
are more open to evil influences; but, on the other
hand, they have more powerful medicines to protect
them. When Kabeta died in 1922, all his sons and his
headmen were put to the poison test, and those who
did not vomit were compelled to pay a fine in cattle,
a token that complete confidence in the belief in evil
influences is passing away; for in earlier times the
culprit so discovered would have been attacked as he
ran, and would probably have paid the forfeit of his
own life. The easier punishment may, however, have
been due to fear of the police.

766 Twins were not exposed; but if one of them died,
the body was cast into the bush, and wailing was not
permitted, for it would cause the death of the other.
To-day the body of a twin is buried in the ordinary
way, but without wailing.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F767 Ngonde F767
Nyakyusa

incensed in the royal enclosure—a great stockade—and jealously guarded, for any infidelity on their part was thought to make their husband ill, and with him the whole country.

When the Kyungu did fall ill he was smothered by the nobles who lived around him at Mbande, and buried in great secrecy, with a wife or more of living persons—slaves—in the grave beneath him, and one or two wives and the son of commoners above. And in the midst of all this slaughter the nobles brought a sheep to look into the grave that the dead Kyungu might be gentle (*mulole*) like the sheep!

The living Kyungu was thought to ensure food and rain, and his breath and the growing parts of his body—his hair and nails and the constantly replaced mucus of his nose—were believed to be magically connected with the fertility of the Ngonde plain. When he was killed his nostrils were stopped so that he was buried 'with the breath in his body'; while portions of his hair and nails and of his nasal mucus were taken from him beforehand and buried by the nobles of Ngonde in the black mud near the river. This was 'to defend the country against hunger', 'to close up the land, to keep it rich and heavy and fertile as it was when he himself lived in it'.

His death was kept secret—a relatively easy matter since he lived in seclusion—and one of the nobles (*Ngosi*) impersonated him wearing his clothes. After a month or two when the nobles had decided whom to choose as the new Kyungu, the luckless man was summoned to Mbande: 'Your father calls you.' Then he came with his companions and entered the house to make obeisance; they seized him and put the sacred cloth on him and set him on the stool "Kimambi", saying, "Thou Kyungu, thou art he", and he became the Kyungu. Then they struck the drum, *Mwenkelwa*, and everyone knew that the Kyungu had died and another had been installed.[1] Men feared greatly to be seized as the Kyungu, just as they feared to be seized as the Lwembe, because the life of a divine king was short. Ngonde historians quote a number of cases of sons of the Kyungu who fled to escape being set on the stool; once they had sat on it they dared not flee lest they die.

Though[1] the early Kyungus had lived on the stony top of Mbande none of them had been buried there, for 'the ground was

[1] The following section is quoted, with additions and amendments, from Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, pp. 19 ff.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1955
FNI? Ngende FNI?
Nyakyusa

one hunt to dig graves in'. They and their successors were all buried in the valley, each in a different spot. Over their graves trees were planted and grew up to form a ring of sacred groves round Mbande. Each grave has a name and the Kyungu who is buried there is usually referred to, not by his own name, but by that of the grove where he lies. . . . We traced sixteen graves in the plain surrounding Mbande and the nobles who pointed them out remembered participating in celebrations at all except that of the last Kyungu. The ruling Kyungu and the spirits of his dead predecessors were believed to form one divine company, the anger of any one of whom had terrible effects, and both living and dead were placated with offerings.

In time of drought the nobles of Ngende would go to a diviner to inquire who it was who was angry; they would mention all the names of the sacred groves of the Kyungus in turn and he would tell them that it was so and so. They would inform the living Kyungu and he would give them a bull or a sheep, together with some beer—they would take one of the pots of beer from his own house, brought by his people as tribute. And he would give them some flour and cloths also. Then they would go with them into the grove and build a miniature hut. Next they would kill the beast and hang some of the meat up on a tree—the rest they would eat later outside the grove. Then they would tear up the cloths and fasten some of the pieces on to the hut in the grove—an action they would explain as 'giving him cloths'. And finally, they would pour out some of the beer and the flour. Nearly always, in time of drought, they would thus build a hut and make an offering in the grove of the Kyungu whom the diviner had mentioned.

But occasionally, if one of the chiefs had recently insulted the Kyungu, they concluded that it was the living Kyungu himself who was angry. They would go to a diviner and mention all the names of the dead Kyungus, but he would refuse to accept any of them: 'No . . . no.' And at length he would tell them that it was the living Kyungu who was angry because so-and-so had insulted him. Then there would be no sacrifice at the grove at all, but the nobles of Ngende would go to the one who had insulted the Kyungu and charge him with it, asking him what he meant by thus killing them all, would not the whole land starve? And so the wrongdoer would take a cow to the Kyungu who, thereupon, would address the nobles of Ngende, saying: 'If it was my

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F3617 Ngonde F3617
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turn round in the belly; people say the earth will go bad in us.' 643
'A child who has drunk medicines will be ill, the smell of the new food or the wet earth goes to the belly.' 769 [788]

The chief eats the first fruits and medicines with the commoner who lies down with him at the commencement of his 'coming out' and 'a his wife to taste with him the first fruits and powdered medicines' and is 'fearful' like the medicines. He is identified with [644] the chief's body and may be compared with the *isikhumwa* of the Pondo chief[1] or the *isoka* of the Swazi.[2] His function is to protect the chief against the medicines themselves.

(*c*) DEATH AND BURIAL OF A CHIEF

Both because of a chief's descent, and because of his use of 643 medicines, mystical power resides in his body. 769 766

In the old days a ruling chief was not allowed to die, but was buried while still living, because they feared that if he became unconscious before death he would take away all the food with him, and great hunger would come on us. Men feared *ifingilo* medicine in his belly. They said: 'If he dies naturally many of his people will die. . . . He should go alive.' And formerly they buried him with the son of a commoner, also alive, for they said, 'Let him enjoy the company of his mate on the road.' When a chief was sick before the coming out of his sons they tried to keep him alive if possible, but if he was clearly going to die then they buried him like this; after the coming out they bestowed his death—but only if he were ill. That was why the chiefs fear the 'coming out' of their sons so greatly. Had Mwaipopo lived in the old days and his heir been alive he would have been buried during his last illness.

When a ruling chief was sick the village headmen sent the chief's wives away and looked after him themselves. Then, if they thought he would, or should, die, they tore off all his nails, those of his toes and those of his fingers, and pulled out his hair, and put them in a pot. After that they buried him by night still alive, with a live person, the child of a commoner whom they had seized very secretly. The pot stayed in the house of the senior wife of the chief who had died, and [778] they said, 'It is the chief, we are with him still.' This was the sacred pot for the sacred beer.[3] They kept silence about the death for a month or perhaps two months, saying: 'Let the chief go away first.'

And when a younger brother, a junior chief, died, though he died

[1] M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 350.
[2] H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 38.
[3] Kaoleka Kasty denied this, *vide infra*, p. 64.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F317 Ngonde F317
Nyakyusa

naturally and was buried dead, and no human was buried with him, yet they buried a live cow with him in imitation of the custom of the senior, because the junior was also a chief, and the cow was like a person. And now in European times the ruling chiefs are buried with a cow, not with a man, in imitation of the custom of the juniors; but still they are buried at night.

Kaitile denied that chiefs were buried before death, but he admitted that they were smothered.

[194] When the chief was very ill we priests came, Njolakosa and Ngulye, and I. We took his nails and his hair, we tore them off while he was still alive, he started up and we bid ourselves that he should not see us. Then we attended to him.

Here he made a gesture of stopping up the nostrils. That is, they hastened his death as soon as the nails and hair had been stripped off.

And we dug the grave; we buried him by night, when he had died, when he had gone, with a live cow; we did this at night for it was taboo for people to see the burial of a senior chief. We killed a cow in the second grave and we ate it, we the priests, before people heard that he had died. The chief Mwakagile (35) when his death was approaching said: 'My body is sick.' After waiting two days, the village headmen said, 'This illness has defeated us', and they tore off his nails—yes, before he died. If they had waited until after his death, would not the *ifyegila*, the power of chieftainship, have passed away? But they did not smother him, he just died. . . . His nails and hair were put into a little reed, which they hid beneath an *umuuli* (*Cheirolaena caudata*) tree at the village headman's, the *umuuli* which grew at the homestead of Njolakosa [the grandfather of the present Njolakosa]. They buried it at a commoner's place, as if to say: 'We commoners are the earth, we have taken the power of growth (*ifyaga*) from the chief, these nails and the hair are the power of growth of the country (*ifyala fya umuuli fye ifyaga fye kisi*).

Kaitile took Godfrey Wilson's hand and explained: 'Because, Mwaipaja (G.W.), when you cut these nails of yours do they not grow again?' 'Yes, they grow again.' 'Well, then, where does their growth come from? Does it not come from the body?' 'Yes.' 'Well, so it is, the village headmen take the power of growth (*ifyaga*) from the chief, his nails and his hair.'

On another occasion Kaitile explained that formerly the relics had been kept in a pot in the house, but that when Mwaipopo (116) succeeded

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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Mpokolwa [the grandfather] ran off with them to Mwaliejo in the hills, where he died so that they disappeared and were never returned to his fellow-priests. Therefore they bury the relics by the ancestral tree, at his old homestead, lest someone run off with them again. . . . The hair and nails of the chief are buried there, the earth of the chief will always be heavy. All this is very ancient. . . .

Mwandisi (103, the old blind chief) told us that

> When a chief dies they take his nails and hair and put them in the house of his wife who buries them with medicine for fertility of the soil (*ifuga*), then at the time of planting the village headmen come and take that medicine to place the food with. This was done on the death of the chief Mwakalukwa (141) and the chief Mwakalinga (140) and others for, it is said, the chief goes off with our fertility (*imbuto yetu*).

Thus, though our informants differed slightly about the details, they were agreed that the power of growth lies in the nails and hair of a chief, and these must be taken from him while he is yet alive, and later used to fertilize the earth.

The burial of a chief's son with a live black calf we saw for ourselves, and the wailing was delayed until after the burial. A distinctive funeral of this sort is accorded to all the sons of a ruling chief and his senior daughter, but not (we were told) to more distant kinsmen. The other mark of a royal funeral is the slaughter of many head of cattle to accompany the deceased and to feed the mourners. At the death of the chief Mwakyembe (99) over 300 head were killed, and Mwaipopo (116) killed thirty head at the funeral of his mother. Since a chief has many wives and daughters he has many affines all of whom must bring cows to kill, and he also has a large herd himself on which to draw. To fail to feed his people at a funeral is to fail as a chief. The whole country mourns for two or three weeks, no one going to work in the fields, or occupying themselves with ordinary business. All smear themselves with mud, as if they were kinsmen, and even the men bind their bellies tightly with mourning belts 'that they may not tremble'.

(*d*) THE CHIEF AND THE 'BREATH OF MEN'

Fruitfulness, the power of growth (*imbuto*), lies in the chief's body and the village headmen have no share in it; they only tend it, taking care that it does not disappear with the dead. But the headmen share with the chief and the priests the duty of 'watching

13:Lehmann E-9 (939) 1951 F'07 Ngonde F'07
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6. A visit to the chief's father's grave was paid in company with the chief and some of his *omafumu*. It was situated in a banana grove (*ilingata*[11]) not very remote from the chief's hut. The grave of the present chief's father was on the ground-floor, about one hundred paces from its edge and was characterized by a small elongated basalt block about half a metre in height[12] and about forty centimetres in breadth. An *indola*-plant was also standing on the grave about one metre from the basalt block.

On this occasion the chief also told me of the special cases for which sacrifices are offered in this grove. These are performed only in cases of very serious accidents, sickness or famine which may overcome the chieftainship. In such cases a black cow is slaughtered after sunset at the edge of the grove. In the presence of the chief some pieces of meat of the slaughtered beast, together with some bananas, are laid down at the grove. The chief adds a prayer to his ancestors at some distance from the grove, referring to the evil by which the chieftainship or some special village of it has been afflicted. He enumerates all the names of his ancestors and asks them for their help.

The remaining pieces of the meat and other bananas are left in the grove during the night. When the next day dawns, the *omafumu* return and some *chwanga* divide the meat and eat it together. On this occasion the chief orders the removal of all remains of ashes from the huts. The ashes are thrown down in such unclean places as where leprous persons had been buried. After this has been done, the chief in conjunction with an *uwanga*[13] produces a new fire for the huts by twirling, and all other fires of the village, or villages, must be kindled anew from this "new-fire".

8. The reason for visiting an *undagusi* (diviner)[14] who dwelled in Ibungu an older age-set village[15] which seemed to the visitor to be a more ancient part of Katumba, was caused by the sickness of the chief's sister. In accordance with the custom of the Nyakyusa in bringing women back to their father's village if they are very sick, the

[11] Cf. Johnston, Gazeta, pl. *enzaleta*, p. 430; *Markwazie, ilinyeta*, burial place, p. 280; *nsapeta*, graves of the dead chiefs, p. 121; Wilson, Introduction, p. 207, *ilingata*, sacred grove; *Mwenakg*, p. 115.

[12] Cf. *Pillsbury*, p. 327.

[13] Cf. a. 5, p. 5.

[14] Cf. *Johnston*, p. 431.

[15] I proposed to call the special form of villages found within the Nyakyusa society, which are erected on the age-set principle, „age-set villages" (*African Studies*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 19—18 June 1943), a terminology that does not alter G. Wilsons statements on the "Age Villages" (Introduction, p. 200 ff).